

former Vermont Commissioner of Education. They've been married 18 years, a second marriage for both. They have four children in their 20s, two sons and two daughters.

Diane Wolk, has a Ph.D. in educational leadership from the University of Vermont, and a long and varied career in Vermont education. She's taught students from elementary school to graduate school, directed the student-teacher program at Castleton State, and served as chairwoman of the state Board of Education.

Wolk retired in 2006 from her job as principal of Northeast Elementary School in Rutland City, bringing to a finish a Vermont career that started in 1972. That year, she was hired to teach first grade at Barstow Memorial School in Chittenden, where she taught for 18 years.

Her last two years as principal in Rutland, Wolk found it increasingly difficult to run the school, she said.

"I was off my game," Wolk said. "I was getting confused, and I thought it was the stress of being principal. I was forgetting things and repeating myself. I wasn't myself."

Leaving her profession meant saying goodbye to a vital part of her life, but it was an important step in her care, her husband said.

"She loved the kids and the teachers and the families. She missed that part," Dave Wolk said. "In terms of her well-being, it was helpful to her. She recognized that intuitively."

"TOUGH THING TO LEARN"

The problems Diane Wolk perceived at work—memory loss, confusion, repeating herself, frustration—had been noticeable to her family and close friends since early 2004, her husband said. The family was concerned enough about the symptoms that Diane Wolk went to her doctor to check it out.

She was ultimately diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2007 at the University of Vermont's Memory Center, where she saw its founder, neurologist William Pendlebury.

"It was a tough thing to learn," Wolk said. "I think I'm still absorbing it."

She has come to understand that the best approach for her is: "OK, it's a new day. Let's see what we can do."

This means Wolk—who considers herself a high-energy person—is adjusting to a slower pace. She's learned to take naps when she's tired. She tries not to "bug" her husband too much. She says she sometimes feels like she's in a haze.

"You get angry at yourself because there are these moments where you know what you want to do and you can't," Wolk said. "And it just gets very frustrating and scary."

"I've always felt that I've been in tune with my body," Wolk said. "If I need to sleep, I sleep. If I need to be in sunshine, I'll be in sunshine."

David Wolk keeps track of her medicine, her meals, her schedule and other aspects of family life. Their children are a great support and visit home often, the Wolsks said.

"We've downsized our lives," Diane Wolk said. "We pick and choose when we want to stay in or go out. I have a great group of friends, and socializing when you have Alzheimer's is very, very important."

Dave Wolk says he tries to minimize the stress in Diane's life, not an easy endeavor for a college president and primary caregiver of an Alzheimer's patient.

"She's my No. 1 priority, and president of the college is my No. 2 priority," he said.

His responsibilities include bringing Diane from their home on the Castleton campus to Fletcher Allen Health Care every six weeks for medical treatment.

She is enrolled in a clinical drug trial at UVM with intravenous infusions every 13 weeks, brain scans and memory tests.

The care provided by Pendlebury extends beyond his leading the clinical study, the Wolsks said. He is "wise and gentle," Dave Wolk said.

"He's very calm, very wise and very uplifting," Diane Wolk said. "He doesn't let you get down. He gives you the information you need and says here is what you can do with it. He's salt of the earth."

One conversation with Pendlebury was particularly important and especially hard to confront, they said. Pendlebury advised the Wolsks to complete advance directive documents, to put in writing their wishes about medical care and treatment options while they are capable of making such decisions.

"Nobody wants to realize their own death. Everybody thinks you've got plenty of time," Diane Wolk said. "But we had those choices to make. Now everybody knows exactly what our wishes are, and it ended up being very comforting."

"CHERISH THE MOMENT"

The Wolsks make an effort to find comfort where they can. This means hanging out with family and friends, taking a July trip to Citi Field to see Paul McCartney, Diane Wolk's other big crush, and practicing a certain acceptance of each day, each moment.

"I've been trying to embrace something akin to a Buddhist philosophy," Dave Wolk said. "I try not to lament the past and I try not to worry about the future. I'm trying to embrace the moment, cherish the moment."

Yet he is fully aware that Alzheimer's is, in his words, a "nasty, progressive disease that's full of doom and gloom."

As he cares for his wife, and makes arrangements and schedules to help ease her way through the day, Dave Wolk remains in awe of her sunny nature.

"If you approach Alzheimer's the way Diane Wolk approaches it—in a very upbeat, positive manner—I believe it can extend life. And extend the quality of life," he said.

Diane Wolk has suffered a decline in her short-term memory over the past couple of months. She is confused about the day and date, and sometimes can't remember what happened yesterday or what's planned for tomorrow.

For Diane Wolk, the "mystery of the brain" makes Alzheimer's a particularly frightening disease, she said. When people are scared of something, they shy away from it. They don't want to talk about it, she said.

"If somebody is struggling with this disease and not knowing where to go or what to do, there's a lot of help out there," Wolk said in July at the hospital.

Dave Wolk remembers the first time he and Diane went to Fletcher Allen for her IV treatment. She receives the intravenous in the oncology unit, where patients go for chemotherapy.

The Wolsks were there for seven hours, and they watched cancer patients come and go.

"Diane kept saying how fortunate we are," Dave Wolk said. "She is such an amazing, inspirational person. I know of no greater profile in courage."

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to recognize the 75th anniversary of the East Bay Regional Park District, EBRPD.

On November 4, 1934, during the height of the Great Depression, the residents of Alameda and Contra Costa

Counties voted to form the EBRPD by a stunning 71 percent. Voters approved this park project in order to provide recreational opportunities and employment during the Great Depression. This year, we celebrate its 75th anniversary and marvel at the visionary efforts that have made EBRPD the largest regional park district in the Nation.

On June 4, 1936, EBRPD acquired its first parcel of land—2,162 acres sold to the district by the East Bay Municipal Utility District. This acreage came to host EBRPD's first three parks—Upper Wildcat Canyon, now known as Tilden, Temescal, and Roundtop, now known as Sibley. Today, EBRPD manages 65 parks on over 98,000 acres, with 1,100 miles of trails throughout Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

The individual parks that comprise EBRPD vary greatly in size, feature, and character. There are parks on the hillsides above the cities of Berkeley and Oakland, waterfront parks along the San Francisco Bay, and a park that includes a turn-of-the-century farm in Fremont. While all parks in the district allow visitors the opportunity to enjoy open spaces, some parks also have visitor attractions including access to swimming, boating, and camping. Located within the urban metropolises of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, EBRPD remains a cherished source of wilderness and recreation for local residents. Through wars and unrest, unprecedented population growth, and both challenging and positive economic times, EBRPD's mission of preserving land for wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and nature education has stood the test of time.

For 75 years, the East Bay Regional Park District has offered a recreational escape for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts and a glimpse of the region's rich history. Its parks also offer a powerful reminder of the beauty of nature and the importance of conservation efforts. I commend the EBRPD staff and volunteers for maintaining the natural beauty and historical significance of this impressive park district. With their continued stewardship, future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy our State's unique history and natural environment for many years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)